

NSC BRIEFING

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MIDDLE EAST NEWS

I. Calm prevails in Jordan for third consecutive week.

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A. Syrians and Egyptians appear to be regrouping.

C. Jordan govt continues public charges Egypt and Syria inspired plot against Hussain, and is convinced strong anti-Egyptian actions must continue.

1. Nevertheless, Jordan may be having second thoughts on precipitate realignment with Iraq.
2. These hesitations, as well as King Saud's own fear of offending Egypt openly and abruptly, probably account for Hussain's decision not to join Saud and Iraqi King Faisal at their talks in Baghdad this week.

II. Meanwhile, new Israeli threats to test freedom of passage of the Suez Canal cast a shadow over the successful Anglo-Egyptian negotiations on this issue.

- A. The Israelis had repeatedly promised they would not inject themselves into the situation until the Western powers had ironed out their own problems with Egypt.
- B. Although there are 13 Israeli vessels which could appear at the Port Said entrance to the canal within two days, the one Israeli ship known to be heading for a test of Israel's rights is the Atlit, a motor ship (under 1,000 tons) which has been making its way around Africa for the Straits of Tiran and Eilat.
 - 1. The Atlit arrived at Capetown on 7 May; at full speed it could reach Djibouti, French Somaliland after 17 May but at normal speed would not get there until the end of the month and to Eilat around 3 June.
 - 2. The Atlit could easily be diverted, however, to make a run for the Suez Canal, possibly under escort of the two French destroyers which were reported last week at Djibouti.
- C. Egypt has recently relaxed the tighter defensive measures which were in effect last month around the canal. However, the Egyptians can still block the canal on short notice.
 - 1. Cairo has been very quiet in the face of the most recent Israeli threat, but there is still no sign it would be willing to drop its blockade against Israel.

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